

REGISTER OF DEEDS

Statement of Purpose

The Catawba County Register of Deeds serves as custodian of all records of real estate, vital records, military discharges, and the certification of notary publics and is essential in preserving the history of the County. This includes providing the public with accurate and expedient documentation as needed.

We are a customer-driven recording agency that provides numerous functions to the legal community and the general public. The Register of Deeds is an elected official of four year terms who is legally charged with recording and maintaining the integrity, completeness, accuracy, and safekeeping of Catawba public records.

The department's highest priority is to provide six services required by North Carolina General Statutes. The six required services are recording legal documents, issuing marriage licenses/certificates, issuing birth and death certificates, issuing notary public oaths/authentications, imaging recorded documents and maps, and indexing recorded documents and maps.

The office is bound by North Carolina General Statutes to make recorded documents available via a temporary or permanent index within 24 hours. Documents must be fully indexed on the permanent index within 30 days of the initial recording. At the same time, the indexing unit strives for a margin of error of less than 1 percent.

Outcomes

1. Provide more timely, courteous, and accurate services to the public by:
 - a. Recording 100 percent of real estate documents the same day received.
 - b. Recording 99 percent of vital records the same day they are received, given there are no problems with the records.
 - c. Responding to 99 percent of all vital records requests (marriage license, birth, and death certificates) received by mail and in person within the same day, given there are not problems with the request.
 - d. To return real estate documents within three days after they have fully been indexed.
 - e. To educate couples of the requirements for marriage license by instructing them of the appropriate documentation accepted within the North Carolina laws.
2. Improve customer service to the public by reducing the amount of in office research time required to obtain copies of needed records by implementing the following technologies by June 30, 2012:

- a. Providing offline and online access to scanned images of the GRANTEE real estate indexing books for 1984 to 1988 since they are already provided for 1992 back to 1989 and 1983 back to 1955. This has been an ongoing challenge each year, but there is hope for this to be completed this fiscal year.
 - b. Providing offline and online access to scanned images of the real estate plats back to book three since we already provide from the most recent recording back to book one.
 - c. Providing offline access for staff only to scanned images and indexing of the Military Discharge DD214 forms. It is yet determined what direction we will be going from, but regardless of the direction, we will complete five books.
 - d. Work with Information Technology to keep Website updated, user friendly, and available 24 hours per day, seven days per week.
 - e. To keep myself and staff educated with the laws that govern this office we will attend the two North Carolina Association of Register of Deeds (NCARD) Conferences and any workshops that might be offered as to make sure that all laws and regulations are followed.
 - f. In order to meet the demands of our customers and to index recorded documents to meet the statutory requirements, it is imperative that our software and hardware works as efficiently as possible and the office has adequate staff to push documents rapidly through the workflow. The Register of Deeds relies on the Catawba County Information Technology Department and Logan Systems to provide assistance with maintenance and support of our servers, upgrades and support for our imaging system, network, hardware, and web application. We have worked steadily to implement computerized processes to meet the increasing demands of the general public for faster and more efficient recording processes. Our customers have come to expect a level of service that becomes increasingly difficult to maintain as workload increases. In order to meet customer expectations in the future, it will be necessary to continually upgrade our applications and hardware as new technology becomes available.
3. To address the current and expected increase in vital records requests, the Register of Deeds Office will undertake the following:
- a. Same day indexing and recordings which consist of working with Health Department and Funeral Homes.
 - b. Providing the indexing and scanned uncertified copies of birth records back to year 1935 on the self-service in-house terminals since we already provide the most recent filing to 1938.
 - c. Providing the indexing and scanned uncertified copies of death records back to 1960 on the self-service in-house terminals since we already provide the most recent filing to 1971.

- d. Providing the indexing and scanned uncertified copies of marriage records back to 1973 on the self-service in-house terminals since we already provide the most recent filing to 1979.
 - e. Training and/or approval of Amendments, Legitimations, and Delayed Certificates through North Carolina State Vital Records and the North Carolina Association of Register of Deeds.
- 4. To ensure an indexing error rate of less than 1 percent, the Catawba Register is using a blind double-key indexing method for all recorded documents. This new procedure will require the original indexer to enter the indexing data. The data is keyed in again by an indexing verifier. The results are compared and any discrepancies are resolved by the verifier. The department will implement cross-training which will allow for additional indexers to enable the indexing of all documents within the mandated 24-hour period. Current position allocations are necessary to provide this level of service reliability.
- 5. The change in the economy affects the real estate area of the Register of Deeds. The national economy began a major recession in early 2008 impacting the number of home purchases in Catawba County. Due to the reduction in recordings projected in the next fiscal year, the Register of Deeds Office plans to put more of an emphasis on long-term projects that will convert paper files to an electronic format. The electronic format will give us a disaster recovery plan should a minor or major disaster take place on the documentation of the County's history. This also allows the files to be more accessible to the public and staff which will permit us to be able to provide better customer service. The following are the long-term projects the Register of Deeds Office will start this fiscal year:
 - a. Index and scan Vital Records (birth, marriage, and death) back to 1842.
 - b. Index and scan Military DD214 records back to beginning, which will be assessable to staff only.
 - c. Index and scan corporate records back to 1980.
 - d. Review 1984 – 1992 Grantee index books so there can be a standard and complete set of these years for scanning.
 - e. Note the monthly out of County deaths received from Office of Vital Statistics in Raleigh on the individual's birth certificate.
- 6. Minimize loss and maximize the ability to retrieve all records in the Register of Deed's Office records in the event of a disaster by ensuring that a Disaster Recovery Plan is intact and operational.
 - a. Backup digitalized real estate records, vital records, military discharges, and notary public certifications either through the Catawba County Information Technology Department, Archives in Raleigh, or Logan Systems.
 - b. To keep the most updated recovery plan in Disaster Notebook and make sure all staff knows how to implement the plan in a time of need.

- c. To have quarterly drills for the staff to make sure they are aware of the Disaster Recovery Plan and how to address any alterations that need to be made to the plan.
- d. To include the public in at least two of the four drills we have throughout the year.

Register of Deeds

Organization: 160050

	2009/10 Actual	2010/11 Current	2011/12 Requested	2011/12 Approved	Percent Change
Revenues					
Real Estate Excise	\$358,797	\$400,000	\$360,000	\$360,000	-10%
Charges & Fees	477,685	481,990	475,508	475,508	-1%
Miscellaneous	198,832	193,500	186,000	186,000	-4%
General Fund	(355,228)	(351,720)	(287,516)	(322,843)	-8%
Total	\$680,086	\$723,770	\$733,992	\$698,665	-3%
Expenses					
Personal Services	\$500,096	\$553,773	\$557,352	\$526,915	-5%
Supplies & Operations	179,990	169,997	176,640	171,750	1%
Capital	0	0	0	0	0%
Total	\$680,086	\$723,770	\$733,992	\$698,665	-3%
Employees					
Permanent	11.00	11.00	11.00	11.00	0%
Hourly	0.60	0.00	0.00	0.00	0%
Total	11.60	11.00	11.00	11.00	0%

Budget Highlights

Ten percent of the total revenues collected for marriage licenses, recording of legal instruments, UCC filing fees, and miscellaneous revenues are recorded in the Register of Deeds Automation and Preservation Fund. The remaining 90 percent stays in the General Fund. This was effective January 1, 2002, when House Bill 1-73 was approved by the General Assembly.

The Register of Deeds budget decreased three percent. This reduction comes from eliminating a Deputy Register of Deeds position as well as minor reductions in printing and binding, small tools and travel.

Excise Tax revenue continues to decline as fewer real estate transactions occur. This revenue has therefore dropped from a high of approximately \$650,000 in Fiscal Year 2007/08 to a projected \$360,000 next year.

Performance Measurement

Fiscal Year 2011/12

Register of Deeds outcomes for next year continue to focus on the preservation of records and making those records available in a timely manner in the office and online as appropriate. Additional records will be made available through in-house terminals next year as follows:

- Birth records available back to 1935
- Death records back to 1960
- Marriage records back to 1973

The department will also continue to work on a long term project of indexing and scanning vital records back to 1842, and corporate records back to 1980. Plats will also be scanned back to 1842.

Fiscal Year 2010/11

The mid-year report for Fiscal Year 2010/11 indicates that all outcomes associated with providing timely, courteous, and accurate services to the public are being met. Thus far, the following has been achieved:

- Real estate documents, vital records, and vital records requests are being recorded daily.
- Records are being indexed with an error rate of less than 1 percent.
- More emphasis is being placed on long-term projects that will convert paper files to electronic format to preserve the records and make the records more accessible to the public.
- More written documentation is available for marriage licenses, both in the office and on the Internet to improve access to these records.

Fiscal Year 2009/10

The Register of Deeds achieved one of its five outcomes and partially achieved the remaining four. The Register of Deeds Office recorded real estate documents on the day they were received 100 percent of the time and vital records on the day they were received 99 percent of the time. The Office also organized, stored, and protected 2,375 microfilm cartridges for easy retrieval.

The Register of Deeds Office improved service to the public by increasing electronic access in the office to scanned images of including grantor real estate indexing books from 1842 to 1992, deeds from book 1 to present, and real estate plat books from book 7 to present. Grantee records from 1984 to 1988 were scheduled to be scanned but were not. These records were recorded with an older software vendor and because they are more complicated to process were postponed in favor of other indexing priorities.

Scanned uncertified copies of birth records back to 1940 (planned to provide to 1938), death records back to 1990, and marriage records back to 1990 are now available on self-service in-house terminals. Several long-range projects were started to convert paper files to an electronic format. This outcome was only partially achieved but will be worked on over the next few years.